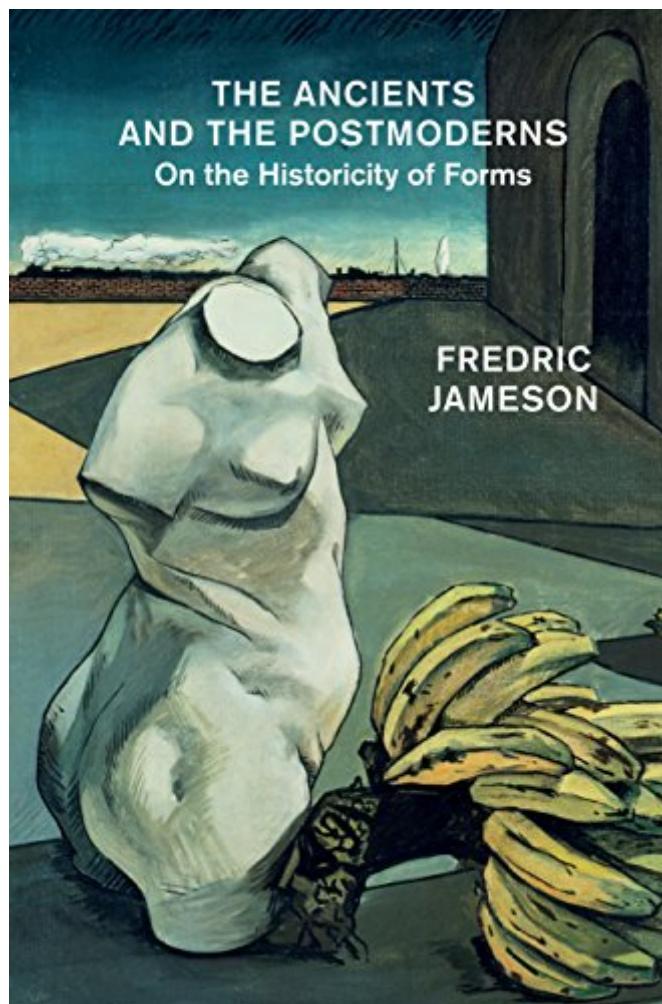


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The Ancients And The Postmoderns: On The Historicity Of Forms



Synopsis

Fredric Jameson sweeps from the Renaissance to The Wire. High modernism is now as far from us as antiquity was for the Renaissance. Such is the premise of Fredric Jameson's major new work in which modernist works, this time in painting (Rubens) and music (Wagner and Mahler), are pitted against late-modernist ones (in film) as well as a variety of postmodern experiments (from SF to The Wire, from "Eurotrash" in opera to Altman and East German literature): all of which attempt, in their different ways, to invent new forms to grasp a specific social totality. Throughout the historical periods, argues Jameson, the question of narrative persists through its multiple formal changes and metamorphoses.

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Customer Reviews

It is always fascinating to read what experts have concluded from a microscopic examination of a work of art. They put things in historical perspective, in biblical context, and find similarities and anomalies, dialectic conundrums, support and contradiction - where I see or hear beauty. So I appreciate the different perspective. This book is the latest collection from Fredric Jameson, as

erudite, expert and analytical as any author ever has been. He analyses artists, film directors, novels, films and tv shows. Some of them you've even heard of. He follows a dictum of Thomas Mann: "Only the exhaustive is truly interesting." (He quotes it twice.) These then are substantially all of Jameson's thoughts on these works, including the references, tangents, asides and free associations. They are piled high and thick. Reading *The Ancient and the Postmodern* was like stepping into an alternate universe, where nothing was as it seemed to the naked eye and the unsharpened mind. Jameson's intensive scrutiny is otherworldly and so granular as to be mystifying. Sometimes you no longer remember what was under consideration. It is filled with dense references, facts and mysterious sentences like: "Leitmotif is the scar left by destiny on the musical present." Jameson's obvious passion is Wagner and Mahler. Their era redefined music. He has seen their works multiple times, can distinguish different directors' productions and different performers' interpretations. He links them to past present and future, moral values, trends, fashions, and the tangents of adaptations. They get about a third of the book. The central theme is: like a black hole at the center of every galaxy, works of art must have a contradiction at their center in order to win any value.

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